

THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HATRA SCULPTURE DESIGNS AND AT-TAR TEXTILE DESIGNS

— A View Based on the Characteristics of the Textiles Unearthed at at-Tar Caves —*

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In respect to design composition and weave technique, the textile specimens uncovered at at-Tar Caves are similar to those unearthed at Dura-Europos, Palmyra and the Cave of Letters which lie along the East Mediterranean coastal areas. As far as more careful observations go, however, the at-Tar textiles have the following marked characteristics of their own.

Many of their patterns are of tapestry weave. Their pattern representations often contain horizontal bands, unique ones of which have in the center such plant bands as flower, grapevine scroll and tree patterns, with the wave pattern bands and the shaded color bands symmetrically arranged above and below. And the shaded color bands are observed to change color gradually from light to dark, starting from the central pattern bands toward the pattern ends. With this sort of design composition compared with that of the finds from Palmyra and Dura-Europos, they are narrower than the at-Tar finds in pattern band width, and smaller and wavier than the at-Tar ones in pattern representation [Fujii, Sakamoto and Ichihashi 1989: 122–125, 127, 128].

Moreover, there are some large, thin textiles with H-shape and gamma-shape patterns on them among the discoveries from at-Tar Caves, as well as from Nubia graves, Palmyra tombs and those from the Cave of Letters, Palestine. The at-Tar textiles with H-shape patterns have four H-shape patterns at the center of a large, thin cloth, which are symmetrically arranged up-and-down and right-and-left on the cloth. And they contain a set of three-oblong patterns each arranged close to the end of the weave start and that of the weave finish along both of their selvages, respectively. And warp weave alteration (warp crossing technique) is evidenced at the pattern contour [Fujii, Sakamoto and Ichihashi 1989: 131–134, 140, 144; 1992: 99–101; 1993: 114–116, 122–124]. For reference, the dyestuff analysis of the wefts (colored reddish purple) used for the H-shape pattern making has proved that they have four kinds of dyeing methods as follows: 1) the weft yarns were spun by the loose fiber dyed with Tyrian purple, 2) spun by the mixtures of the loose fiber dyed with Tyrian purple and the loose fiber dyed with kermes, 3) spun by the mixtures of the loose fiber dyed with Tyrian purple and the loose fiber dyed with indigo, and 4) spun by the mixtures of the loose fiber dyed with kermes, the loose fiber dyed with indigo and the loose fiber dyed with yellow natural dye (not yet defined) [Kimura, Sakamoto and Fujii 1993: 141–148]. Also, there is a textile of 卐-shape, i.e., swastika, tapestry weave in the oblong patterns (Textile 9 ((specimen V-65-1)) unearthed from Cave 16, Hill C) [Fujii, Sakamoto and Ichihashi 1993: 118, Pl. 2a, 2b]. Besides, there has been uncovered a chain-stitched pattern fragment which was woven by using grayish brown thread on the plain weave ground [Fujii, Sakamoto and Ichihashi 1993: 117–118, Pls. 2a, 2b, 7a].

These pattern band compositions without gamma pattern as given above are also seen on the patterns of the human statues' tunics and surplice-like mantles uncovered at Hatra. The swastika meander pattern

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and grapevine scroll pattern are likewise observed among the architrave and frieze designs in the Hellenistic temple. In this connection, here we must take note of the evidence of the Hatra human statues. We see some of them wear the outerwear with H-shape pattern:

- 1) The priest clothed in the mantle with H-shape pattern is putting his right hand in the incense-burner (No. VI Shrine, Iraq Museum, IM 58085), [Fujii, Sakamoto and Ichihashi 1989: 127, Pl. 34C].
- 2) As its similar examples, there are also the priest statues which have been unearthed at Nos. X, XI Shrines, and the statue (12/Hatra 393) from the Grand Temple (near the Nasrou Gate) [Safar and Mustafa 1974: 76, Pl. 20].
- 3) And those coming from the other sites are the Conon figure of a fresco in the Palmyra temple in Dura-Europos [Ghirshman 1962: Pl. 59] and the persons wearing the outerwear of H-shape pattern evidenced on the wall paintings of the Synagogue in Dura-Europos [Millet, Rostvtzeff and Hopkins 1939: Pls. XLI, XLIII, LI, LII; Goodenough 1964: Vol. IX, 124–174, Vol. XI, Pls. VI, VII (West wall)].
- 4) The examples given in the above 1), 2) and 3) are of all simple H-shape patterns without any decorations on them. On the other hand, there is another different example among the Hatra human statues, that is, the one which contains a short sword-like pattern in the lattice pattern designed on the H-shape pattern, which was unearthed from the Grand Temple (13/Hatra 460) [Safar and Mustafa 1974: 75, Pl. 19]. Deduced from the fact that its pattern design resembles that of the statue of King Atiw (IM 110662, MM 8), the above Hatra human statue may be regarded as a priest of some royal birth.

And the others wear the garments of swastika meander design:

- 1) The statue representing a prince or nobleman whose name is Shamshákab (Shamshiheh) unearthed from the Grand Temple in front of the Iwan No. 1, 5/Hatra/97 [Safar and Mustafa 1974: 77, Pl. 22].
- 2) And the relief of King-Priset Sanatruq I worshipping Nemesis-Allat unearthed from Building B. The king is wearing the outerwear of swastika meander pattern on top of the inner-wear of grapevine scroll pattern [Salhi 1985: 139, Figs. 41–43].

From the above two examples, it is presumed that the swastika meander pattern evidenced on the tunic and the outerwear may be one of some patterns which were designed on the clothes to be worn by some royal members and/or noblemen. The aforementioned Textile 9 (V-65-1) may safely be assumed as an outerwear worn by a priest from some royal family or aristocracy, since its square pattern, which is seen to accompany the H-shape pattern, is designed with the swastika meander pattern inside.

In addition to the above, there are human statues wearing such tunic as woven with the grapevine scroll pattern which is similar to the ones from at-Tar. Nihra image (second son of Sanatruq I, IM 3001) is one of the above examples [Fujii, Sakamoto and Ichihashi 1989: 127, Pl. 34b; Fujii and Sakamoto 1992: 97]. At Cave F-6, we have unearthed a large, thin cloth (Specimen C-38-5-1-b) with a pattern whose motif resembles that of Nihra image [Fujii ed. 1976: 171, No. 91; Fujii ed. 1980: 150, Fig. IV-34]. And it is very interesting to learn that the restored architrave and frieze of the Hellenistic temple at Hatra contains grapevine scroll pattern and swastika meander pattern arranged up and down [Fujii, Sakamoto and Ichihashi 1993: 76], which suggests to us the close relationship between the above two as the symbol of worship. These two designs of the Hatra statues as mentioned above can also be found among those of the clothes worn by some royal members.

Very unique works are the several pieces of emblems bearing Hellenistic portraits in tapestry weave technique on them, which have been discovered sewn on a large, thin cloth each, unearthed from F3 Cave,

F4 Cave and F6 Cave in Hill A, and from C16 Cave and C17 Cave in Hill C. And they have been classified into two types in weave technique and design composition (See pp. 77–93 of this volume for full particulars.). Their rich expressions have been made more attractive by using non-horizontal weft technique ('Nagashi-ori' in Japanese). It seems to us that one of the former human images symbolizes Dionysos' female incarnation, wearing a hair ornament of bunches of grapes and their leaves, and besides, she has a crown-like one containing two global and two scroll pattern decorations on top of base band with a red line, on her head. In this connection, most of the musicians, carved on the frieze of the small southern Iwan at Building B, Hatra, which are seen at the upper part of the grapevine scroll band, are wearing such sort of hair ornament that two central buttons are surrounded with the grapevine scroll pattern looking like figure '8' which is lying sideways [Invernizzi 1991: 46, Pl. XVII, Figs. 1–5].

Here, we would like to point out essentially some common features in motif representation between these human images: the one symbolizing Dionysos' female incarnation from at Tar Caves and the other, the Hatra musicians. And the vertical direction of the portrait is equal to the textile's warp direction (vertically directed figure), with its borders decorated with parapet motifs top and bottom, and indented geometric motifs on both sides [Fujii and Sakamoto 1987: 220–223, Fig. 71]. In the meantime, one of the latter human images wears a golden crown on the head. And the vertical direction of the portrait is equal to the textile's weft direction (horizontally directed figure), four sides of which are decorated with wavy motifs [Fujii and Sakamoto 1987: 220–223, Figs. 71–73]. Perfect frontality is stressed on many human sculptures uncovered at Hatra, whereas portraits uncovered at at-Tar chiefly depict 3/4 frontality (See p. 85 of this volume for full particulars.). In this connection, most of the musicians carved on the frieze of the small southern Iwan at Building B, Hatra are also of 3/4 frontal attitude [Invernizzi 1991: 42, Pl. XVII, Figs. 1–5]. That is why both of the above-mentioned at Tar ladies and Hatra musicians look very cheerful and attractive.

In summarizing the weave technique and design of the at-Tar textiles, we have thus observed that they are the ones of quite characteristic qualities, as already mentioned above. At-Tar caves are located in the borderland of the Mesopotamian Southwestern Desert, which is an important place for traffic open to the East Mediterranean coastal areas and the Gulf areas through the caravan routes cleared along oases and artesian wells. With the geographical location kept in mind, our general presumption is that when the Hellenistic culture and Roman tradition advanced toward the East Mediterranean coastal areas, a new cultural complex came to be formed through the change of the Hellenistic culture and Roman tradition by their contact with some local cultures there (e.g., Palmyra, Dura-Europos and Letter Caves). Furthermore, with their eastward advancement into Mesopotamia, another new cultural complex was born by their contact with the local cultures there (e.g., Hatra). In this way, we think that such unique textile culture as evidenced among the discoveries from at-Tar caves used to flourish around here in the Iraqi southwestern area roughly from the 2nd to the 3rd century A.D.. It seems that although loose fiber dyed with Tyrian purple was undoubtedly imported here through the caravan routes running past oases or wadis, most of the textiles were manufactured in this area. It is thus presumed that here was once the existence of some authoritative society on a considerable scale, where at some workshops, ancient workmen were engaged in finishing the works of such elaborate, extensive culture, while importing a part of the materials (e.g., the loose fiber dyed with Tyrian purple [Kimura, Sakamoto and Fujii 1993: 147–148]) and further making better use of the technical knowhow of the dyeing method, weave technique and design composition which had come from the western world.

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